The Virtue of *Qiyām al-Layl*

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مؤسسة الخليل

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the name of Allāh, the most Merciful, the especially Merciful. Praise be to Allāh, an abundant, blessed, and good praise. I bear witness that there is no god (worthy of worship) except Allāh, alone without partners. And I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger. As for what proceeds: My dear and beloved ones, in this gathering we will speak about an act of worship that has become forgotten among many Muslims. In fact, many Muslims only observe it only once a year (i.e., during Ramaḍān). It is the worship of the Qiyām al-Layl (the Night Prayer). By the will of Allāh, we will discuss the virtues of Qiyām al-Layl.

The Virtues of Qiyām al-Layl

✺ **THE FIRST VIRTUE:** The first virtue of Qiyām al-Layl is that Allāh has praised its observers. The Great King (subḥānahu wa taʿālā) praises those who stand before Him (subḥānahu wa taʿālā) during the night. Allāh says: **"Their sides part (i.e., they arise) from [their] beds; they supplicate their Lord in fear and aspiration, and from what We have provided them, they spend. And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes (i.e., satisfaction) as reward for what they used to do."** (as-Sajdah, 16-17) Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā) has praised these people! They combine between acts of worship that are personal (whose benefit is limited to oneself) and acts of worship that extend to others. They perform Qiyām al-Layl, this is a personal act of devotion; and

they also perform acts whose benefit reaches others, such as spending in the way of Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā).

So observe, may Allāh have mercy on you, how they strive in worship, and they give their best to get closer to Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā), and even with that - they are in a state between fear and hope, as the believer is. The believer engages in worship and fears Allāh, while the hypocrite does not act nor does he fear Allāh. Due to this, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (raḥimahullāh) commented on this verse: "That is because they concealed their deeds, since Qiyām al-Layl is between you and Allāh, and no one knows that you stand in the night - Allāh concealed for them bliss and delights what no eye has seen and no ear has heard."

✺ **THE SECOND VIRTUE:** The second virtue of Qiyām al-Layl is that it is from the signs of the muttaqīn (righteous). Our Lord says: **"Indeed, the muttaqīn will be among gardens and springs, accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before that doers of good."** (adh-Dhāriyāt, 15-16) Then, Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā) describes them: **"They used to sleep but little of the night."** (adh-Dhāriyāt, 17) So bring this quality to yourself, to your condition, to your life: **"And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness."** (adh-Dhāriyāt, 18) They would stand in prayer during the night, just as Imām Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (raḥimahullāh) commented: "It means they don't sleep at night except a little,

for they endure the night in standing, bowing, and prostrating (in prayer), and yet they conclude this act of worship by seeking forgiveness (in the morning).” Their role model in that is their master, Muḥammad (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) who used to stand in prayer at night until his feet would swell.

So look, may Allāh protect you, at how this person who rises in the night, and certainly Qiyām al-Layl requires jihād an-nafs (striving against the desires and temptations) because Qiyām al-Layl, as some scholars have stated, is from the most difficult acts of worship upon the soul. Performing it requires effort, sacrifice, and training. Some people ask: “How do I perform Qiyām al-Layl?” I say to them: in the early days, you will definitely feel tired and find it difficult. But with training, practice, and consistency, Qiyām al-Layl will become a part of your life which you cannot live without. The people who commit themselves to Qiyām al-Layl - Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā) has described or made them among the muttaqīn; and He has made it from the most prominent signs of the muttaqīn.

✺ **THE THIRD VIRTUE:** Also from the virtues of Qiyām al-Layl is that they (those who observe it) are not equal in the sight of Allāh (to those who don’t). Yes, they are not equal in the sight of Allāh, as He says: **“Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does**

not]? Say: 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding." (az-Zumar, 9) Can a person who spends the night heedless, wandering, sleeping amid distractions, between staying up late, gossip, watching TV, films, and theater, and wasting time, be equal to a person who stands in the night praying to his Lord (subḥānahu wa taʿālā), crying out of fear of Allāh, and humbling himself before Him (subḥānahu wa taʿālā)? They are not equal before Allāh. That is the living heart, subḥānAllāh!

When the living heart hears the verses of Allāh (ʿazza wa jall) recited upon - you would find it reflecting, contemplating, humbling itself, listening, and applying those verses. This is the living heart! As for the heart that is dead, we ask Allāh for safety and well-being (from it), he hears the verses of Allāh recited upon him day and night yet it does not affect or move him. Rather, you would find him, and we seek refuge in Allāh, turning away. There is no power nor might except with Allāh.

✺ **THE FOURTH VIRTUE:** From the virtues of Qiyām al-Layl is that prayer in the night is better than the prayer in the day. It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim from Abū Hurayrah (raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu) that the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: "The best prayer after the obligatory prayers is the night prayer." Referring to voluntary prayers (i.e., voluntary night prayers are better than voluntary day prayers). What is the secret and wisdom behind prayer in the

night being superior to the daytime voluntary prayers? Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (raḥimahullāh) mentions three reasons:

1. Because it is hidden (from others), and thus it is closer in sincerity. If you want sincerity and want to strengthen it to Allāh (ʿazza wa jall) - then perform Qiyām al-Layl. For when performing Qiyām al-Layl; no-one knows what you are doing, not even the closest people to you. So it is closer to sincerity.
2. Because there is hardship in Qiyām al-Layl at night, in it is hardship against the nufūs (pl. of nafs). A person rises from his comfortable, warm bed to stand before Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā). This involves struggle, effort, and striving against your nafs and Shayṭān.
3. He also said that because reflection, contemplation, and humility while reciting the Qurʾān is more conducive during Qiyām al-Layl. A person is alone with Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā), so he reflects deeply upon what he recites.

✺ **THE FIFTH VIRTUE:** From the virtues of Qiyām al-Layl is that Qiyām al-Layl is a cause of entering Paradise. Imām at-Tirmidhī (raḥimahullāh) narrated in his sunan from ʿAbdullāh ibn Salām that the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: “Feed others, maintain family ties, and pray at night while people are asleep - then you will enter Paradise in peace,” meaning: you will enter Paradise without any

punishment. The scholars have mentioned that from the causes of entering Paradise is Qiyām al-Layl.

✺ **THE SIXTH VIRTUE:** From the virtues of Qiyām al-Layl is that it is the honor of the believer, reflect on your true honor! Some people think that their honor is by their wealth, status, lineage, or degrees; but no it is not! Your honor is as the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: "And know that the honor of the believer is by his Qiyām al-Layl." Narrated by aṭ-Ṭabarānī. Thus, the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) made it clear that Qiyām al-Layl is the honor of the believer, it proves his (the believer's) sincerity, trust in Allāh, and his strong faith. So Allāh will raise his rank and status before Him (subḥānahu wa taʿālā). For this, Imām Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (raḥimahullāh) was asked: "Why do those who pray at night have faces full of light?" He replied: "Because they secluded themselves with the most Merciful, so He granted them from His light."

✺ **THE SEVENTH VIRTUE:** Likewise, my dear and beloved ones, from the virtues of Qiyām al-Layl is that when a person stands in prayer during the night - he will coincide with the last third of the night. Our Lord, the Lord of Might (tabāraka wa taʿālā), the Lord of the Earth and Heavens, descends to the lowest heaven in the last third of the night. This is a divine period of time, the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: "Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven every night during the last third of the night." When does the

last third of the night begin? You calculate it from the adhān of Maghrib until the prayer of Fajr, for example, if it is twelve hours - then you divide the twelve hours into three parts. The last four hours would then be considered the final third of the night. And this varies between summer and winter. So imagine, may Allāh have mercy on you, that the Great King, the Most High, the Compeller, the most Merciful, the especially Merciful, the Bestower, the Ever-Giving, descends to the lowest heaven in the last third of the night. What does our Lord (subḥānahu wa taʿālā) say then? He says: “Is there anyone calling upon Me so that I may answer him? Is there anyone asking Me so that I may give him? Is there anyone seeking My forgiveness so that I may forgive him?” What blessed moments are these!

Allāh, free of any need from us while we are in complete need of Him, calls out to His servants: “Is there anyone seeking forgiveness so that I may forgive him? Is there anyone asking so that I may give him?” And even then, you would find that a person from the offspring of Ādam who is sinful, negligent, and disobedient, we seek refuge in Allāh, deep in sleep, as is said, while Allāh is calling out. Should not one of us feel ashamed before his Lord? Allāh is calling you, the Most Merciful, the Bestower, the Ever-Giving is calling you: “Is there anyone asking Me so that I may give him? Is there anyone seeking My forgiveness so that I may forgive him?” Yet you would find this (sinful person) heedlessly and unawarely sleeping. And there is no power nor might except with Allāh.

For this, we find that Ṭāwūs bin Kīsān (raḥimahullāh), one of the Tābiʿīn or those after them, once passed by a man at the time of suḥūr and knocked on his door. His family said: "He is sleeping." So Ṭāwūs was amazed and said: "How is he sleeping?! Is there anyone who sleeps at this time?!" Meaning: the time of the divine descent, the time when duʿāʾ are answered.

✺ **THE EIGHTH VIRTUE:** Like that, my dear and beloved ones, from the virtues of Qiyām al-Layl is that whoever performs it is described as an "excellent man." It has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar (raḍiyallāhu ʿanhumā) that the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: "What excellent man ʿAbdullāh is, if only he prayed (Qiyām al-Layl) during the night." Referring to ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar. Look at this statement: "What an excellent man ʿAbdullāh is, if only he prayed (Qiyām al-Layl) during the night." Do you know what happened to ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar after this?

Look at the Ṣaḥābah and how they would get affected by a few words, not entire khuṭbas or lectures, no! A single word which they would hear from the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) would be enough to affect them, and make them act upon it and implement it! Then, do you realize what ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar (raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu) did after this? Sālim said: "He would sleep little when he heard these words." "What an excellent man ʿAbdullāh is," al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī

(raḥimahullāh) commented on this and said: "What this ḥadīth implies is that whoever performs Qiyām al-Layl is described as an 'excellent man.'" What a tremendous virtue this is! Imagine the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) describing you as an "excellent man" simply because you perform Qiyām al-Layl. Even if someone prays for half an hour or an hour, the important thing is implementing what the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) did. Pay attention my brothers - every night, try to implement two matters:

1. Pray eleven or thirteen units, as it has been narrated from the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam). ʿĀʾishah reported that the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) would pray eleven units in every night, whether in Ramaḍān or outside of it. This is the first matter which you should consistently maintain every night. However, you may lengthen or shorten the prayer depending on your circumstances. A person may be tired, sick, or have other conditions - but still try to maintain these eleven units every night. You can either make them longer or shorter. You could even pray them in half an hour, reciting just the 30th juzʾ that you have memorized, it is still a blessing, goodness, and a great favor.
2. Try to recite 100 verses, for the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: "Whoever stands (in prayer) with one hundred verses in a night will be recorded among the qānitīn (the devout)." You will be written with Allāh as one of the qānitīn, meaning: those who are obedient and

devoted to Allāh (subḥānahu wa taʿālā)'s commands. Only 100 verses; easy! You have sūrah an-nabaʾ which is about 40 verses, sūrah an-nāziʿāt which is about 46 verses, sūrah ʿabasa which is 42 verses, sūrah al-mursalāt which is 50 verses, and so on. The 29th juzʾ and 30th juzʾ likewise, all of its verses are short, so you can pick a sūrah or two and recite them across two units. By simply doing this, you have implemented the ḥadīth: "Whoever stands (in prayer) with one hundred verses in a night will be recorded among the qānitīn." And you will be written with Allāh as one of the qānitīn. This is a great honor and dignity for you from Allāh.

✺ **THE NINTH VIRTUE:** Qiyām al-Layl is from the causes of Allāh's mercy. The Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: "May Allāh have mercy on a man who wakes up at night (to pray) and wakes his wife (for the same thing)." They pray together, or each of them prays individually. For this, the truthful daughter of the truthful, ʿĀʾishah (raḍiyallāhu ʿanhā), advised us greatly saying to us: "O servant of Allāh, do not abandon Qiyām al-Layl, for the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) did not abandon it. If he was sick or tired, he would pray sitting (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam)."

The Causes that Assist in Qiyām al-Layl

Now, my dear and beloved ones, we will speak about the causes that assist one in performing Qiyām al-Layl:

✺ **THE FIRST CAUSE:** Abandoning sins and disobedience of Allāh. Sins and disobedience create a barrier between a servant and his Lord. And they are the reason for every affliction, misery, distress, and deprivation in this world and the hereafter. For this reason, al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ (raḥimahullāh) said: "If you are unable to fast during the day or perform Qiyām al-Layl, then know that you are deprived and bound, your sins have shackled you." Some people complained to the noble Ṣaḥābī, ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd (raḍiyallāhu ʿanhu), saying: "We are unable to perform Qiyām al-Layl." He replied: "Your sins have prevented you." Imām al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī also said: "A man commits a sin and is deprived of Qiyām al-Layl for it." So if you become deprived of Qiyām al-Layl, O servant of Allāh, then examine yourself, your life, and your state. What did you do during the day? Perhaps you backbit someone, or fell into looking at something forbidden. Perhaps you committed a sin which deprives you of Qiyām al-Layl.

✺ **THE SECOND CAUSE:** From the matters that assist you in Qiyām al-Layl is eating little. The one who ate and drank much will then sleep much. There is no doubt that excessive eating makes the body heavy and sluggish.

✺ **THE THIRD CAUSE:** Similarly, duʿāʾ is from the matters that assist you in Qiyām al-Layl. That is because Qiyām al-Layl is tawfīq (granting of success) from Allāh, a Divine gift

and a Lordly bestowal. And Allāh (ʿazza wa jall) does not give this act of worship, which only a few perform, except after tawfīq. So before you sleep, make duʿāʾ to Allāh that he grants you tawfīq and helps you, and humble yourself before him, say: "O Allāh, O Lord, O Ever-Living, O Sustainer, O Possessor of Majesty and Honor, O Lord of the Mighty Throne, O Allāh assist me this night, Allāh honor me, grant me success, and aid me this night to stand before You in Qiyām al-Layl."

✺ **THE FOURTH CAUSE:** Eating and consuming from what is lawful and staying away from what is unlawful. Allāh says: **"O messengers, eat from the good foods and work righteousness. Indeed I am Knowing of what you do."** (al-Muʾminūn, 51) Imām Ibn al-Kathīr commented: "Thus, consuming from what is lawful assists one in doing righteous deeds."

✺ **THE FIFTH CAUSE:** Likewise, from the matters that assist you in Qiyām al-Layl is Qaylūlah, which is taking a nap in the middle of the day. It has come in some reports that one should seek help through Qaylūlah for Qiyām al-Layl. That is because if, for example, someone was awake from the early morning until the late night, a few hours after ʿishāʾ prayer, how can he perform Qiyām al-Layl while working and striving all day? No doubt that he cannot do that, unless Allāh wills.

✺ **THE SIXTH CAUSE:** Frequent dhikr (remembrance) of Allāh. Frequent dhikr grants the human strength, tawfīq, and

victory over his nafs, desire, and Shayṭān. For this, the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) advised ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭimah (raḍiyallāhu ʿanhumā) to glorify Allāh before they slept when Fāṭimah requested a servant. He instructed them with the known tasbīḥ: 33 times "SubḥānAllāh," 33 times "Alḥamdulillāh," and 34 times "Allāhu Akbar."

✺ **THE SEVENTH CAUSE:** I say, my dear brothers, finally, among the matters that assist one in Qiyām al-Layl is purification of the heart; the nafs being free from hatred, envy, and grudge. There is no doubt that those with diseased hearts are not granted tawfiq in the greatest acts of worship. Thus a person must purify his heart and cleanse himself from these illnesses of hatred, envy, selfishness, spite, and resentment, so that his Lord grants him tawfīq in this great act of worship.

Finally, I ask Allāh to grant me and you tawfīq to what He loves and pleases Him. And our final duʿāʾ is that praise be to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds.